

ACT II] BEING EARNEST
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Gwendolen. *[In a bored manner.]* Bread and butter, please.

Cake is rarely seen at the best houses nowadays. Cecily. *[Cuts a very large slice of cake and puts it on the tray.]*

Hand that to Miss Fairfax.

[Merriman does so, and goes out 'with footman.]

Gwendolen

drinks the tea and makes a grimace. Puts down cup at once, readies out her hand to the bread and butter, looks

at it, and finds it is cake. Rises in indignation.

Gwendolen. You have filled my tea with lumps of sugar, and

though I asked most distinctly for bread and butter, you

have given me cake. I am known for the

gentleness of my disposition, and the extraordinary sweetness of my nature,

but I warn you, Miss Cardew, you may go too far.

Cecily. *[Rising.]* To save my poor, innocent, trusting

boy from the machinations of any other girl there are no lengths to

which I would not go.

Gwendolen. From the moment I saw you I distrusted

I felt that you were false and deceitful, I am

never deceived

in such matters. My first impressions of people

are invariably

right.

Cecily. It seems to me, Miss Fairfax, that I am

trespassing on

your valuable time. No doubt you have many

other calls of

a similar character to make in the neighbourhood.

[Enter Jack,

Gwendolen. *[Catching sight of him.]* Ernest! My own Ernest!

Jack. Gwendolen I Darling! *[Offers to kiss her.]*

Gwendolen. *[Drawing back.]* A moment! May I ask if

you are

engaged to be married to this young lady?

[Points to

Cecily.

Jack. *[Laughing.]* To dear little Cecily! Of course not! What

could have put such an idea into your pretty little head?

Gwendolen. Thank you. You may I *[Offers her cheek.]*

Cecily. *[Very sweetly]* I knew there must be some misunder-

standing, Miss Fairfax. The gentleman

whose arm is[^] at

present round your waist is my guardian, Mr. John Worthing.

Gwendolen. I beg your pardon?

Cecily. This is Uncle Jack.

Gwendolen. *[Receding.]* Jack! Oh!

Enter Algernon.

Cecily. Here is Ernest.

Algernon. *[Goes straight over to Cecily without noticing any one else.]* My own love! *[Offers to kiss her.]*